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Stop Child Predators Supports Legislation Restricting Access to Child Pornography

Washington, DC – Today Stop Child Predators applauded Members of Congress for introducing bi-partisan legislation that will help prevent the proliferation of child pornography by requiring peer-to-peer file-sharing distributors to obtain the informed consent of users before information on their computers is shared. The Informed P2P User Act, HR 7176, was introduced by Representatives John Barrow (D-GA), Joe Barton (R-TX) and Mary Bono Mack (R-CA).

Studies have shown that users of peer-to-peer applications have unknowingly exposed their tax returns, health records, business documents and other confidential information through file-sharing programs. In addition, peer-to-peer applications can be used as vehicles for distribution of illegal child pornography. While the very availability of such content on these systems is in itself abhorrent, even worse is that these files are often deliberately labeled with seemingly benign titles such as “Pokémon,” “Hannah Montana” and others that appeal to children.

As a result, when a child searches for these popular terms on a file-sharing service, he or she runs the risk of being exposed to child pornography. To make matters worse, because these programs automatically share any file that is downloaded onto a user’s computer, the child may unwittingly become a worldwide distributor and publisher of the same pornography to which he or she was exposed, making it more likely that others will be exposed as well.

“We commend Representatives Mary Bono Mack and John Barrow for recognizing that peer-to-peer file-sharing applications make it dangerously easy to expose children to child pornography, and use them as unwitting distributors of the same. This legislation will put into place appropriate safeguards to help curb the dissemination of child pornography,” said Stacie Rumenap, Executive Director of Stop Child Predators.

The perceived anonymity afforded by peer-to-peer networks can lead pedophiles to believe they can indulge their perverse fantasies with impunity. In a hearing last year before the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, the chairman of a popular peer-to-peer application admitted that “P2P networks are plagued by child pornography.”

Requiring full disclosure of file-sharing programs' capabilities, and ensuring users' informed consent to sharing their own files with others, represent concrete steps toward safer and more productive use of peer-to-peer file-sharing software.

Use of the Internet to disseminate child pornography is a pervasive problem. Earlier this year, Stop Child Predators filed comments with the Federal Communications Commission arguing that any new rules governing broadband industry practices should not interfere with the ability of Internet Service Providers to make sure their networks are not used to transmit child pornography. Stop Child Predators also weighed in on *United States v. Michael Williams* before the United States Supreme Court. This case was an appeal from a federal court ruling that struck down a law prohibiting individuals from marketing and trafficking child pornography on the Internet. In June, the Supreme Court upheld the law.

About Stop Child Predators

Stop Child Predators brings together a team of policy experts, law enforcement officers, community leaders, and parents that persuade lawmakers and the public to enact policies that protect America's children from sexual predators. Stop Child Predators is the only national organization that leads campaigns in every state to advocate legislation that prevents the sexual exploitation of children and protects the rights of victims.

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